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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 001096

SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR TO SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND DEPUTY SECRETARY  
ARMITAGE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: SCENESETTER FOR SECDEF AND DEPSECSTATE  
MEETINGS WITH DEFENSE MINISTER-DESIGNATE BONO

REF: A. MADRID 919

[1](#)B. MADRID 1052

[1](#)C. MADRID 1074

Classified By: Ambassador Goerge L. Argyros, reasons  
1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: When you meet with Jose Bono April 5 in Washington, you will find this long-time Socialist party "heavyweight" an affable, smooth politician who could be a pro-U.S. voice of reason in the new government headed up by Socialist Party (PSOE) leader Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. We suggest focusing on the positive aspects of the Spanish-U.S. defense relationship and caution against trying to force Bono, in this first meeting, to define the new government's policies in all areas of cooperation, in particular the U.S.'s use of Spanish bases at Rota and Moron. We think that allowing Bono and other members of the new government some time to adjust to their new roles will increase the possibility the U.S. can persuade them to take positions favorable for American interests. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Bono is one of the PSOE's key party bosses and narrowly lost to Zapatero in a struggle for party leadership in 2000. (Refs A and B contain more detailed bio information). He is well respected by those in his party as well as by members of the soon-to-be opposition Popular Party (PP). He is also highly regarded by the Spanish military. Bono is likely to be a strong and highly influential figure in the Zapatero administration.

[1](#)3. (C) In my meeting with him March 30, Bono said he was a friend of the U.S. and looked forward to continuing Spain's excellent defense relationship with the U.S. (ref C). He asked to meet with Secretary Rumsfeld to convey personally on Zapatero's behalf the new government's position on Spanish troops serving in Iraq. He politely declined to preview the position for me in the meeting. We are unsure as to what Bono plans to say on the issue. Nonetheless, it seems odd that Bono would not be willing to discuss the Spanish position with me if he simply planned to repeat to Secretary Rumsfeld Zapatero's publicly declared position on Iraq. There is at least some chance Bono plans to pass on information Zapatero has not mentioned in public.

[1](#)4. (C) Although Zapatero made a big campaign issue out of his opposition to the Iraq war and to Spanish troops in Iraq reconstruction, neither he nor any other PSOE leaders made an issue out of U.S. use of Spanish bases at Rota and Moron. We thus think it is important to steer clear of pressing Bono and the Spanish too hard to define their position at this early stage on the U.S.'s use of the bases. The U.S. is more likely to be able to favorably influence Zapatero government thinking on the bases if we allow Zapatero, Bono and others to assume their new positions and become familiar with this complex issue (including learning from their own military how positive our cooperation has been up to now). Forcing their hand now may make them take a hard line position they might not otherwise take.

[1](#)5. (C) On the Spanish troop deployment to Iraq, we believe that Zapatero and his PSOE advisors have not yet made up their minds about whether a new UN resolution could cover their campaign promise to withdraw Spanish troops if there is no UN mandate. We also believe that Zapatero and his advisors have not yet fleshed out the kind of content they would need in such a resolution to provide them with political cover to allow the troops to remain. Therefore, this is a moment in which outreach at the senior leadership level can have some influence, as long as we are not seen as pushing them on other politically sensitive issues on which the as-yet-to-be-formed government has not determined its key interests.

ARGYROS